

Employment Strategies for People with Disabilities: A Prescription for Change

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EDITOR'S NOTE

If an antidiscrimination mandate is to yield a higher employment rate among persons with disabilities, it must be complemented by training, support, and placement services for persons with disabilities as well as technical assistance for employers. With over a decade of experience in facilitating job placements for persons with disabilities, Paul G. Hearne authoritatively reviews the major programs and service systems in place that will support persons with disabilities as they pursue employment in the private sector. He considers the provision of "reasonable accommodations" in the workplace under section 504 and recalls employers' fears about the potential cost of accommodations when section 504 was enacted. Concluding that costs never proved to be an obstacle, he notes that "their [employers'] determination to comply with both the law and with contemporary best practice in addressing the needs of their employees made the costs of accommodation a trivial problem." He reviews sources of technical assistance.

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The purpose of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is to enable persons with disabilities to participate fully in American life by prohibiting practices that systematically discriminate against them. Full participation in American life means many things, but the most important may be paid employment for persons able and willing to engage in it. I will describe current knowledge about increasing the employment and employability of persons with disabilities. (In the preceding chapter, Chai R. Feldblum discusses the obligations of employers under the ADA.) This article is directed to an audience of persons with disabilities, employers in the private and public sectors, and government officials, at all levels.

The enactment of the ADA signaled a change in America's public policy toward employing people with disabilities. This change has occurred in less than two decades. When President Richard M. Nixon vetoed the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, he complained that it "would cruelly raise the hopes of the handicapped [for gainful employment] in a way that we could *never* responsibly hope to fulfill" (Nixon 1973). When President George Bush signed the ADA, in July 1990, he proclaimed, in striking contrast, the "end to the unjustified segregation and exclusion of people with disabilities from the mainstream of American life" (Bush 1990).

What had changed in 17 years? Change had occurred among persons with disabilities, in the United States economy and its labor market, in attitudes of employers toward employing persons with disabilities, and in the policies and professional practices of the public and private agencies that assist persons with disabilities to enter the work force.

Many people, myself included, believe that these changes are incomplete. Much more must be done to enable persons with disabilities to retain, restore, or claim their independence. However, the progress of the past two decades makes it conceivable that more gains will continue to take place in the future.

Such progress depends on learning well the lessons of the past, which is my principal subject. I will begin with a brief summary of what has been learned during the past two decades about employing persons with disabilities. Senior corporate managers and officials of general government should read the summary closely, as it contains information that their human resources staff and consulting rehabilitation professionals should have told them already.

The rest of the article expands on and qualifies this summary. First, a section on the labor market describes current knowledge about employees, employers, and the economic environment. The next section, on programs for employing persons with disabilities, reviews the recent history of major intervention, public and private. The final section looks to the future.

WHAT WE KNOW: A SUMMARY

Persons with Disabilities. The majority (66 percent) of working-aged persons with disabilities are not working, although the overwhelming majority (78 percent) want to work (Harris 1986).

Employers. A large percentage of managers give employees with disabilities high ratings for performance. Moreover, three-quarters of all managers say that the average cost of employing a person with a disability is not excessive. Nevertheless, the hiring of persons with disabilities is not widespread except by companies that make special efforts (Harris 1987).

The Economy. There is good news and bad. On the one hand, changes in demography and in manufacturing processes and the rise of the service sector are creating new opportunities for productive work by persons with disabilities. On the other hand, the current recession and the pressures of international competition are reducing overall demand for labor, especially for workers who are likely to require new expenditures for accommodations and fringe benefits (Burkhauser, Haveman, and Wolfe 1990; Johnston and Packer 1987).

Programs to Increase the Employment and Employability of Persons with Disabilities. There are a bewildering variety of these programs, each with supporters and detractors. However, there is solid evidence for two generalizations:

1. When persons with disabilities receive opportunities for paid employment, as well as services, they are more likely to enter and remain in the labor market (Kiernan and Stark 1989).
2. Differences in the success of programs (of both the same and different types) are mainly the result of (a) the severity of the disabilities of the persons served; and (b) the management (personnel, planning, and execution) of each program (J.M. Foundation 1986).

THE LABOR MARKET

The labor market for persons with disabilities is too often described in a disaggregated fashion. Persons with disabilities are polled, counted, and assessed separately from employers, whose attitudes, in turn, are investigated as if the structure of the economy and the strength of demand for goods and services did not matter. I will call attention in this section to the results of research and analysis about these aspects of labor markets.

THE ECONOMY

Almost everyone who writes about employing persons with disabilities cites the recent book *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century*. Most people, however, read it selectively, in order to justify their prior optimism or pessimism about the future. A careful reading of the book, in conjunction with other studies and with breaking news about the economy, suggests a different message.

That message is as follows. Economic forecasters tell us that there will be opportunities for increasing the employment of persons with disabilities, but only if we seize them. Thus the low birth rate in the United States since the 1970s, relative to the prior two decades, means that labor markets will be tighter: more jobs will be available for fewer workers. At the same time, however, competition from firms in countries that pay lower wages for comparable work, combined with cost-cutting pressures at home, are giving employers in the United States incentives to lay off older workers, who are more expensive in both pay and benefits.

Barriers to employing persons with disabilities were rising in the years before the enactment of ADA. The percentage of men with a work

disability who were working full time fell by 7 percent between 1981 and 1988. Moreover, in 1980, men with disabilities earned 23 percent and women 30 percent less than men and women without disabilities. By 1988 these numbers had fallen to 36 percent for men and 38 percent for women. Similarly, the number of workers who became disabled on the job increased by 33 percent between 1985 and 1988, while the number who returned to work fell from 48 to 44 percent (Rochlin 1989). Elsewhere in this book, Edward Yelin describes the effects of these layoffs in the recent past and suggests ways to track them more precisely in the future.

Similarly, the transformation of the U.S. economy from manufacturing to services creates both opportunities for and impediments to employing people with disabilities. Opportunities for employing people in new or expanding occupations have been created alongside more part-time work with lower wages and poor or nonexistent fringe benefits.

Finally, the health of the economy is as important as its structure for assessing enhancement of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The ADA is being launched during wide predictions of the worst economic downturn in more than a decade. Even before this downturn began, moreover, the well-being of persons with disabilities was declining and persons with multiple disabilities were losing economic ground at an especially rapid rate.

The current recession will make employers more cautious about the potential costs of the ADA. Many employers who cheerfully and voluntarily paid the costs of workplace accommodations for people with disabilities during the recent boom are likely to resist making accommodations that are mandated by the ADA. They will certainly oppose proposals to raise state and federal taxes in order to increase the employability of persons with disabilities. Moreover, it will be difficult for the federal government to authorize additional tax expenditures (for tax credits or mandated fringe benefits, for example) that would provide incentives to employers to hire and retain persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities have sought and gained the right of access to the mainstream of American life. As a result, they will be subjected to the burdens as well as sharing in the successes of our economy.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Pessimists about the state of the economy, and therefore of its labor markets, should not underestimate the will to work of persons with disabilities. The history of the introduction and passage of the ADA and of the important post-1973 legislation that paved its way is evidence of how successfully persons with disabilities have translated aspiration into political action. The famous 1986 survey, *Disabled Americans' Self-Perception*, conducted by Louis Harris and Associates (1986), documented the strength of this group's desire to work—and their frustration about barriers to employment.

EMPLOYERS

Similarly, many employers, especially larger ones, have concluded that increasing the employment and the employability of persons with disabilities is good business. Another Harris survey documented this point. So did an earlier survey by Berkeley Planning Associates (1982) under contract with the U.S. Department of Labor and a more recent one conducted by the Bureau of National Affairs (1990). A number of studies have concluded that the costs of most workplace accommodations are not onerous (Job Accommodation Network 1987). These costs are often no more expensive than the costs of supporting other workers. Many accommodations benefit the entire work force (improved lighting and ramps, for example). A number of individual firms have documented their positive experience with increasing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. These firms include AT&T, Du Pont, and IBM (Du Pont 1990).

PROGRAMS

However, only a relative handful of persons with disabilities and employers will, unaided, find each other in the labor market. A labor market, without any subsidized training, placement, support, or accommodations, works reasonably efficiently for highly educated and skilled persons with the least severe disabilities and for employers with uncommon profitability, intense social conscience, and, often, a strong desire to improve or maintain their corporate image.

For the remaining persons with disabilities and employers, however,

a variety of programs have proven to be necessary. Each program has constituencies: clients, professionals, voluntary associations, employers, philanthropists, and government officials. Sometimes these constituencies overlap. Most often they compete. Each constituency, in the American way, has competitors who would rather see funding go to their constituency. With only a few exceptions, the programs to assist persons with disabilities in obtaining and retaining employment rely on a mix of public and private funds, public and voluntary auspices, public regulation, and voluntary oversight.

Moreover, precisely what programs do to, for, or with whom is strongly influenced by local circumstances. A national public program, like Vocational Rehabilitation, or a national voluntary program, like Goodwill Industries, will not operate in precisely the same way in each state and city. Goods and services produced by local economies vary, as do the conditions of local labor markets. So will the incidence, prevalence, and severity of disability in the population. More important, there are vast local differences in the management and results of similar programs.

Employers as well as persons with disabilities must come to practical terms with this diversity of program type and quality. The most effective strategies for coping with diversity will involve local planning by leaders in the private, public, and voluntary sectors, and the creation of networks that serve both employers and persons with disabilities. Each firm, as well as each organization representing and serving persons with disabilities, will need to be aware of program capacities and performance in their own geographical area.

These firms and organizations, moreover, will require access to data that service agencies are sometimes reluctant to provide. The data include the benefits provided by the service agency to present and former clients, the results of providing those benefits (in the context of the severity of disability in the population served), and information about the agency's productivity. In other words, employers should require that organizations serving persons with disabilities be as businesslike as they are.

A diverse population requires diverse services. Elsewhere in this book, Mitchell LaPlante describes the diversity of persons with disabilities in the United States. Moreover, the number of people with disabilities who want to work but cannot—in technical terms, the rate of work disability—varies widely among the states (Kraus and Stoddard 1989). Thus, there is a need for good programs of every type described below.

Readers should be wary of misplaced enthusiasm for programs that seem to have the lowest unit costs and the greatest success in placing clients in paid employment. Their laudable characteristics often result from their clients being the least severely disabled. Moreover, measures of success have limited meaning if there is no appropriate follow-up for the period of time that the person with a disability maintains employment. In addition, cost effectiveness is not the full measure of a successful job placement.

Readers should also be wary of programs in which professionals have full responsibility for deciding when clients are ready for vocational experience or job placement. More persons with disabilities have voices than have spoken to date.

I will describe three types of programs. The first, and largest, are the traditional programs for persons with disabilities, mainly the most severe disabling conditions. The second are promising recent approaches that involve active collaboration among employers, persons with disabilities, and service agencies. The third are programs that assist employers in making workplace accommodations that enable persons with disabilities to be productive employees.

TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS

This section defines and describes the results of research and analysis about the three most familiar, and by far the largest, programs to assist persons with disabilities in attaining and retaining employment that is consistent with their abilities. These programs are Vocational Rehabilitation, sheltered employment, and rehabilitation facilities. The distinctions among these programs are often blurred. For example, Vocational Rehabilitation may fund or maintain rehabilitation facilities and sheltered workshops. These workshops are often managed by rehabilitation facilities. Moreover, all three programs participate in the relatively new supported employment initiatives.

Vocational Rehabilitation. The federal–state Vocational Rehabilitation program has long been the major service program in the field. It now receives more than 90 percent of the funds appropriated under the omnibus Rehabilitation Act. The program allots funds to the states to provide rehabilitation services to persons with “physical and mental handicaps” in order to prepare them to “engage in gainful employment to the extent of their abilities.” Services provided in each state, either directly or by contract, include “evaluation of employment potential,

physical or mental restoration, vocational training, special devices required for employment, job placement, and follow-up services" (Smith 1987a).

The Vocational Rehabilitation program accords priority to persons with severe handicaps. Emphasis on this priority since 1975 has been one factor contributing to a decline in the number of persons served from 1.2 million to 930,000, while the number of persons rehabilitated (that is, gainfully employed) has declined from 325,000 to 220,408 (National Association of Rehabilitation Facilities 1990).

Like any large public program with a broad and difficult mandate, Vocational Rehabilitation has both supporters and very vocal critics. Its supporters claim that its benefits exceed its costs. A recent study found \$5.55 in lifetime earnings for each dollar spent on Vocational Rehabilitation programs (Smith 1990). In 1989 the U.S. Department of Education reported that for every dollar spent on Vocational Rehabilitation, \$11 is contributed to the tax base.

Critics of Vocational Rehabilitation, and especially critics, like myself, who have had personal experience with the program, have charged repeatedly that the program is isolated and has overly complicated standards of eligibility for client services, long waiting lists, and uneven administration. The charge of isolation is supported by evidence of insufficient linkages to programs and services that promote employment skills and goals for youths with disabilities, inadequate linkages between Vocational Rehabilitation offices and the business community, and poor coordination with voluntary and private agencies providing rehabilitation services. For example, in many communities, one job applicant is "marketed" to the same local employer by both public and private agencies (Center for Independent Living 1978).

Many critics also claim that federal and state eligibility standards for Vocational Rehabilitation services are too complex. Because of the difficulties of understanding and complying with these requirements, rehabilitation professionals often avoid making referrals to services to which their clients may be entitled.

Like all federal-state programs, Vocational Rehabilitation leaves considerable discretion to state officials. Vocational Rehabilitation services are in education departments in some states, and in labor departments in others. Standards for services and the quality of program administration vary widely among the states.

Sheltered Employment. This is one of the oldest and most problematic of programs to employ persons with disabilities. A sheltered work-

shop is a public or nonprofit organization that is certified by the U.S. Department of Labor to pay subminimum wages to "persons with diminished earning capacity" (Smith 1987b). Approximately a quarter of a million persons are now served in more than 5,000 of these workshops (Kiernan and Stark 1986). These persons have a variety of disabilities that include, mental retardation, alcoholism, blindness, and mental illness. Many have reduced earning capacity due to advancing age. An increasing number are homeless.

Sheltered workshops are problematic for two reasons: (1) controversy about what they achieve and (2) dispute about whether they will have sufficient markets in the future. Many critics have claimed that very few persons advance from sheltered workshops into gainful employment at market wages. They urge that only persons with the most severe disabilities be placed in these programs, with more people being shifted to programs of supported employment. Other informed observers dispute this pessimistic view. Goodwill Industries, for example, claims that a significant number of its clients move from sheltered employment to the labor market.

The second reason that sheltered employment is problematic involves the shift to a service economy. The workshops may not provide useful experience for persons whose only chance for gainful employment is to be providers of services. Moreover, it is not clear how many workshops can remain viable, even at subminimum wages, in the face of competition from other countries in packaging and light manufacturing.

Rehabilitation Facilities. The important generalization about the thousands of nonprofit medical, vocational, and residential rehabilitation facilities is that they are essential to the effective implementation of the ADA. The facilities are currently financed through a mix of grants, contracts, corporate and foundation contributions, and individual donations. The activities of these facilities that are most important to the success of the ADA are community-based supported work, work-adjustment programs, work services, and occupational skill-training programs. Supported employment will be addressed below, along with other emerging strategies.

A great deal is known about the scope and effectiveness of rehabilitation facilities. The National Association of Rehabilitation Facilities issues publications describing and assessing the activities of its members (Morrison 1991). Since 1986, the annual publications of J.M. Foundation, its National Awards for Excellence in Vocational Programs, have

been perhaps the best source for information about the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs (J.M. Foundation 1986). For the first several years of the awards these publications emphasized the wide range of effectiveness of programs within each type. Effectiveness, the J.M. Foundation staff and their advisers concluded, is independent of the resources available to a facility, its size, or the economic conditions of its community (J.M. Foundation 1987). More recently, the foundation's publications have presented evidence that aggressive planning and management improve the effectiveness of all programs, regardless of type or location (J.M. Foundation 1989).

PROMISING COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS

In what follows, four types of programs are described:

1. Programs to make local labor markets work more effectively both for employers and persons with disabilities
2. Projects with Industry
3. Supported employment
4. Centers for independent living

All four types of program rely for effectiveness on vigorous cooperation among persons in the public and private sectors and persons with disabilities as individuals and in groups. Advocates for these programs want them to receive additional financial support from Vocational Rehabilitation, from other titles of the Rehabilitation Act, from state agencies for mental health and mental retardation/development disabilities, and from the private sector.

Job-Matching Programs. These programs develop rapport between a local business community and persons with disabilities who are eager and able to enter the work force. The job fair is a prototypical example of a matching program. In one widely replicated model, a company invites other employers in its region to participate in a day-long "fair" during which they interview persons with disabilities. The companies that agree to participate identify specific jobs that are vacant. A job-placement agency for people with disabilities recruits, prescreens, and matches candidates with these jobs. Where appropriate, the agency suggests accommodations in the job specifications or the workplace and assists the new employee in arranging transportation. In my experience as a program director of Just One Break Job Fair in New York City, I saw

50 to 75 companies while attending the fair in 1990, conducted three or four interviews for each position, and hired approximately 12 of each 100 candidates at the end of the fair.

Projects with Industry (PWI) is a well-known, federally sponsored program authorized by the Vocational Rehabilitation Act. It provides competitive employment for persons with disabilities on the basis of agreements between rehabilitation organizations and private employers. Several studies have documented that success in PWI projects requires strong linkages between rehabilitation providers and employers, especially where employers provide specific job skills. In 1986, 13,000 job placements under PWI occurred across the country at a cost of \$1,164 per placement (Morrison 1991).

Supported Employment. Originally developed as an alternative to sheltered workshops, supported employment is targeted to those individuals with severe disabilities who require special support services in order to maintain employment. These support services may be needed on a long-term basis or a time-limited one until the employment stabilizes. This program model holds considerable promise for persons with severe disabilities who have not competed successfully for employment or whose competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent. Since 1987, supported work programs have been eligible for modest federal support under the Rehabilitation Act.

Most rehabilitation professionals agree that supported work programs for persons with disabilities who were previously regarded as unemployable should meet reasonably precise criteria for employment status, integration, and the provision of support. The employment criteria in general use are that participants should be paid for an average of 20 hours per week for work in a job site in their community. The accepted criteria for integration are that there be eight or fewer workers with disabilities per site who work in close proximity to other workers, and that job descriptions be personalized to each individual. The criteria for support are that it be ongoing, and include public or private funds to facilitate and maintain employment, provide reemployment assistance, and coordinate resources necessary to sustain an employee in a job (National Association of Rehabilitation Facilities 1989a).

Four supported work models have been devised, implemented, and evaluated. In the most frequently used model, individual placement with a "job coach," individuals with severe disabilities are placed in employment and given ongoing support by a trained specialist. An "enclave" model consists of small groups of persons with severe disabili-

ties working together under supervision in an integrated setting. "Mobile work crews" is a model in which small groups of persons with disabilities travel to various sites with a supervisor and provide contractual services. Opportunities for interaction with persons without work disabilities are planned to occur regularly at these sites. The least frequently used model is "entrepreneurial" (or "small business" or "benchmark"). In this model, a new small enterprise, employing persons with and without disabilities, produces goods or services.

Evidence about the performance of these program is sketchy but encouraging. In a 1989 study of more than 500 organizations, 81 percent reported that an average of 73 percent of their supported employees received salaries "within the normal range for nonhandicapped employees engaged in the same type of work." The individual placement (job coach) model was "reported to be the most cost effective as well as the most difficult to administer." Referrals to these programs came mainly from sheltered workshops, but also in significant numbers from work-activity programs and school systems. This study predicts a huge growth in demand for supported work programs in the next several years. Almost half of the rehabilitation clients currently in programs could be served by supported work by 1992 (National Association of Rehabilitation Facilities 1989a).

A study of exemplary supported employment practices published later in 1989 found that effective programs deviated from federal guidelines in significant ways. Practice in the field seems to be outrunning theory and regulation. For example, enclaves are used effectively as transition sites; there is excellent social integration in some programs with more than eight supported employees per site; off-site supervision is frequently provided to individuals with chronic mental illness; and programs sometimes provided training prior to placement in supported employment (National Association of Rehabilitation Facilities 1989b). These findings reinforce the conclusions of the J.M. Foundation's reports about the enormous variation in effectiveness within programs of any particular type.

Independent Living. Although originally not an employment initiative, the independent living movement has become increasingly important in this field. The fundamental principle of independent living is that people with disabilities *themselves*—not their counselors or other professionals—should have the primary influence on their own lives. People with disabilities should assert that influence in order to gain their maximum potential and make their own choices.

The concept of community has been the basis of the movement since the first of what are now some 200 independent living centers was established in Berkeley, California in the early 1970s. The centers are run by boards of directors that are composed primarily of people with disabilities. Services provided by the centers pertinent to employment include self-management, acquisition of daily living skills, and peer and benefit counseling.

Beginning in 1987, the Rehabilitation Act authorized discretionary grants to independent living centers to “help provide a range of services including advocacy with respect to legal and economic rights” (Smith 1987b). As the centers gain competence, constituents, and funds, they will be increasingly important in the implementation of the ADA and other national and local policies.

WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS

Considerable experience is available to assist employers in making the workplace accommodations mandated by the ADA. In this section I will define accommodations from the point of view of employees and employers, assess what is known about their cost, and identify sources of technical assistance to employers and to persons with disabilities.

What Accommodations Are. A workplace accommodation is any intervention that facilitates a person’s ability to perform a job. Such interventions include changes in the physical environment (e.g., ramps, restrooms, menus in braille), changes in the tools of work (for instance, devices that assist persons with visual impairments to read, or assisted listening devices), and changes in how jobs are structured (for example, task descriptions or modified work schedules). The required type of accommodation will obviously vary with the individual employee, the requirements—and the purposes—of a particular job, and the environment of each workplace.

What Accommodations Cost. Although there is strong evidence that most workplace accommodations are not prohibitively expensive (Berkeley Planning Associates 1982), some members of the business community continue to be apprehensive and others are agitated about their potential costs. A well-known economist has fantasized that the ADA will create “open-ended litigation” in which federal agencies try to force employers to “share their wealth with the disabled regardless of the actual relation between the productivity of the disabled worker and the costs of accommodation” (Burkhauser 1990).

What is the source of this concern? In part it is the normal and understandable nervousness among employers about any increase in the cost of doing business, and especially an increase that cannot easily be quantified precisely because accommodations must be tailored to each employee. Moreover, most employers have both practical and ideological objections to costs that are mandated by government. These objections are amplified because employers' obligations are measured by a legal criterion, the absence of "undue hardship," which will require ongoing clarification. The economist quoted above has his own agenda. He raised the specter of excessive cost in order to argue that federal mandates should be accompanied by federal subsidies.

The pertinent history of the costs of workplace accommodations is what happened in response to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This legislation required that accommodations be made by employers who received federal funds. Initially, section 504 aroused the same apprehension and agitation that surfaced with the ADA. However, many senior managers now recall that their fears about the cost of accommodations under section 504 were stimulated by human-resources and budget officers who were professionally eager to call attention to yet another claim on scarce resources. Many of these managers also recall that their determination to comply with both the law and with contemporary best practice in addressing the needs of their employees made the costs of accommodation a trivial problem. In several studies, managers told surveyors that the costs of most accommodations could easily be met within existing budget allocations. In a 1982 study, for example, half of the accommodations had no or a trivial cost; another third cost less than \$500 (at 1982 prices); fewer than 10 percent cost more than \$2,000 (again in 1982 prices) (Berkeley Planning Associations 1982). A 1987 study found that 50 percent of accommodations cost less than \$50, 69 percent less than \$500, and less than 1 percent more than \$5,000 (Job Accommodation Network 1987).

Sources of Technical Assistance. Employers have many sources of technical assistance available to them in making accommodations. The most efficient technical assistance can often be provided by employees or prospective employees with disabilities themselves: just ask them what they need in order to perform their jobs. Many employees have access to other experts on their own staffs or in their communities. When implementing section 504, for example, many hospital managers discovered that their employees with disabilities and staff physical therapists already knew precisely what needed to be done in every

department. In many communities, moreover, Independent Living Centers and other organizations of and for people with disabilities are eager to suggest ways to make cost-effective accommodations.

A significant source of technical assistance for employers and persons with disabilities is the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), established in 1984 by the President's Committee on Employment of Persons with Disabilities. The JAN has a national data bank of more than 20,000 successful accommodations. In response to calls to toll-free numbers, JAN determines the limitations of an individual based on her or his disability and the requirements of the job. The JAN staff recommends an appropriate accommodation. JAN staff estimate that for every 100 calls they receive, 72 facilitate the job placement of a person with a disability. In response to the ADA, JAN is acquiring more incoming toll-free lines and adding staff.

In sum, fear that the ADA requirements for workplace accommodations will add enormous costs and stimulate nightmarish litigation are unjustified. More likely, the ADA will provide opportunities for employers, employees, and public officials to work together to create a more productive and decent American workplace.

TOWARD THE FUTURE

If the ADA is to contribute to more productive employment for more people, a great deal must be done in a very short time in a discouraging economic environment. Employers, persons with disabilities, and medical and vocational professionals require a great deal of education. Federal, state, and local benefit programs for people with disabilities must be reexamined critically and, in many instances, modified. Funding for implementing the ADA needs to be found, even in these hard times, from both direct and tax appropriations. Technical assistance should be timely, trusted, and effective. Congress needs to exercise continuous oversight over both its own agencies' and the nation's implementation of ADA. Perhaps most important, the private sector must become increasingly comfortable about entering into partnerships with both the disability community and government leaders in implementing the Act—and in achieving its profound implications for Americans' lives.

Many individuals and organizations are suggesting improvements in

each of these areas. My personal list of suggestions is long and detailed. Among other important matters, this list includes:

- proposals for additional tax incentives to employers to hire persons with disabilities and make appropriate accommodations
- many changes in the Rehabilitation Act in order to make services and training more effective
- proposals for private and public-private partnerships to implement the ADA and facilitate employing persons with disabilities

The implementation of the ADA should result in profound changes in the lives of persons with disabilities. These persons are indeed "equal to the task," as we know from both systematic research and from a mass of anecdotal evidence. Implementing the specific provisions of the ADA will enable persons with disabilities to have better access to transportation, public accommodations, employment, communications systems, and other aspects of daily living that persons without disabilities take for granted. For disability policy in the United States, and especially for that policy as it applies to employment, the ADA is a new beginning that builds on years of effort by many concerned citizens. It is a prescription for change.

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